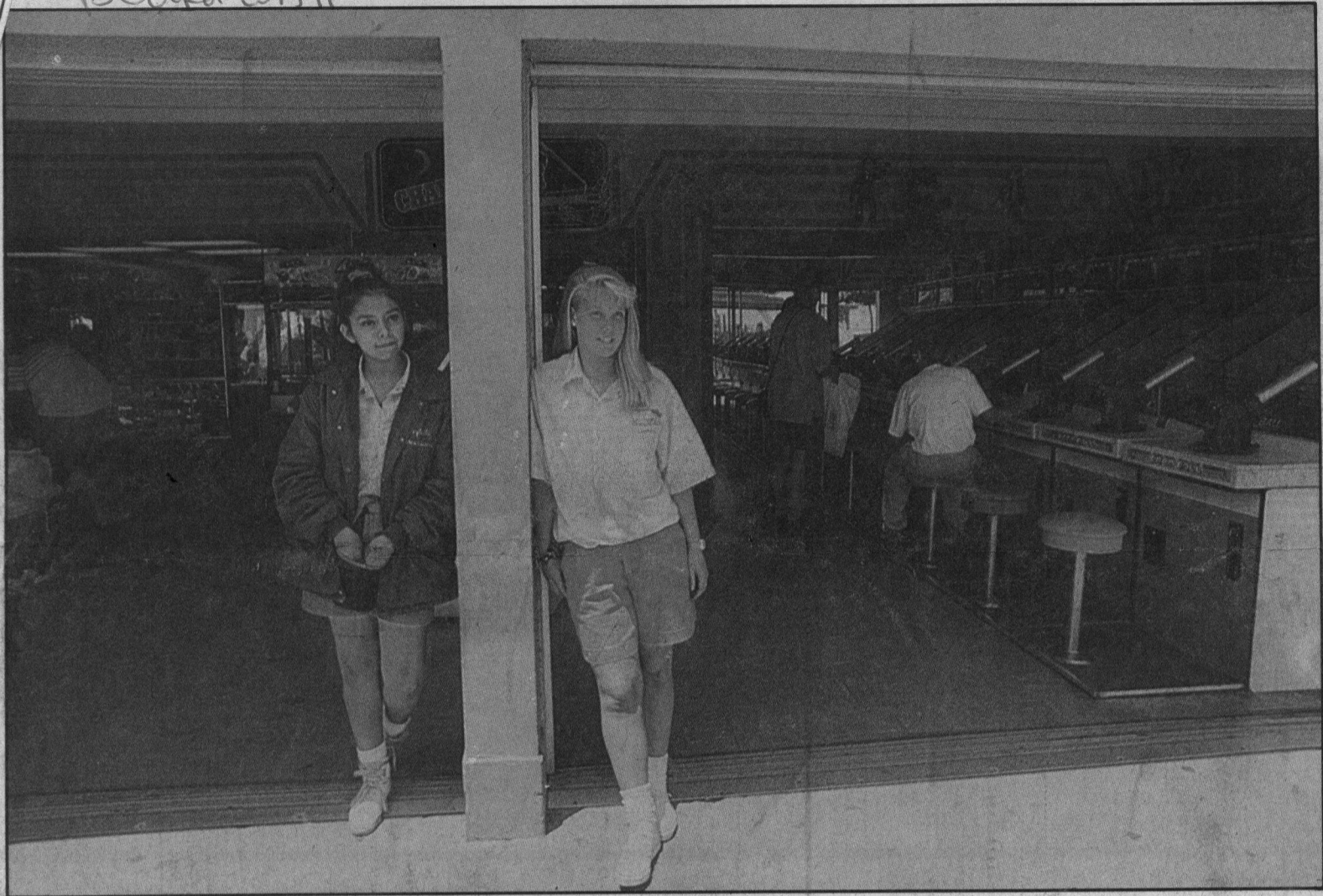


Making concessions

Boardwalk



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Carla Casillas and Jenny Cumstay, both 15, love their concession jobs and say their hours are monitored closely.

Boardwalk concessionaire fined

Labor officials cite Canfield Company

By MARTHA MENDOZA
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SANTA CRUZ — U.S. Department of Labor officials announced Tuesday that Boardwalk owner Charles Canfield and a Watsonville store owner have been violating federal child labor laws.

"They were working 14- and 15-year-olds for too many hours in a school day and too late at night," said U.S. Department of Labor investigator Frank Conte.

Conte enforces child labor laws established at the turn of the century to protect young children from long, arduous hours in sweat shops and coal mines. Today those laws generally apply to high school students working afternoon and summer jobs.

Conte said investigators working a year-long "sting operation" beginning March, 1991, found Charles Canfield Concessions Inc. had 22 youths between 14 and 15 years old working up to 45 minutes beyond legal restrictions on non-school days, two hours more than allowed on school days, as late as 8 p.m. on school nights and up to 11:30 p.m. during the summer months.

Federal law restricts anyone under 14 from

most work, and 14- and 15-year-olds are only allowed to work three hours a day on school days and eight hours a day during the summer. In addition, teen-agers under 16 may not work after 7 p.m. on school nights, and after 9 p.m. during the summer.

Canfield's Seaside Co., which runs the Boardwalk, the Holiday Inn and several beach area motels, was not cited by the investigators. However, his concessions company, which operates about 20 games on the Boardwalk, including Skee-ball, Skeeroll, Shoot Out the Star and Bazooka Guns, has been assessed \$13,875 for violating the laws. Fines

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average about \$600 per employee, but vary according to the extent of violation.

Barry Watkins, general manager for Charles Canfield Concessions Inc., has appealed 13 of the 22 charges. He says he was disappointed in the size of the fine.

He explained that the violations were the result of teen-agers who clocked out late, and he stressed that the company is very careful to schedule 14- and 15-year-olds within legal hours.

"I agree with the law which protects minors from employers who are mistreating or abusing them," he said. "I don't think we fall into that group, but we'll probably be categorized that way. This is going to paint us in a picture that I don't think is fair to the company. It was a real slap at the way I think we run the place."

Watkins noted that many teen-agers are hired for their first time on the Boardwalk, and that he works to have it be fun and educational employment.

"I'm being forced to look at not hiring anyone under 16, which is really too bad," he said. "But that risk is too great, the penalty is too big."

Carla Casillas and Jenny Cumstay are 15-year-olds who love their jobs operating the games and say their employer keeps a close eye on their hours.

"They make sure we clock out on time," Casillas said. "Otherwise, they get a fine."

Also penalized in the sting was the Six Stars Factory Outlet in Watsonville, where the owner said the charge was "very unreasonable" and referred questions to Watsonville High School's Career Center.

Career Center counselor Dan Dickman explained that the \$600 penalty for having a 15-year-old girl work more than three hours a day was "a bureaucratic thing," which has been appealed by the school district.

Dickman said Six Stars refused to hire the girl because they needed someone to work more than three hours a day during the school year, and that the school's work experience program had written her a work permit, making an exception to those restrictions.

That exception is legal under state law, but it violates federal law, Dickman said.

Conte said the appeals will be reviewed by Department of Labor officials in the next few months.

He said this is the first time either business has been penalized

for breaking child labor laws, and he noted that it is not his agency's job to make exceptions because the violations appeared to be relatively minor.

The investigation encompassed businesses throughout the nation, and resulted in \$1.6 million in penalties against some 500 firms for illegal employment of more than 2,000 minors.